Communion Mediration June 7, 198i

Pentecost

Pablo Casals and his Fther made a sensational discovery one time. Rummaging about in some very old manuscripts they came upon six hitherto unkown Suites for Cello by Johann Sebastion Bach.

The normal sequence following such an important discovery would be to rush into production, reharse quickly and share this priceless treasure with the music-loving world as soon as possible. Casals did not do that. Instead, the story goes he reharsed the suites, and lived with them and discovered their subtleties, and argued with them and studied them and rehearsed them over and over - for twelve years before playing them publically. The result confirmed his instinct: it was the right decision. He alone knew that the importance of the task required not so mucn a sense of urgency, as patience, discipline, maturity and opportunity for growth.

This is a lot of that in the grand sweep of Christian history. There is a bit of it at the very beginning - the part of the story that happens immediately after the crucifixion and re resurrection.

The disciples, apparently, remained in Jerusalem . . hiding, waiting for some indication as to what they should do next, living with the reality of what they had witnessed, discussing it, arguing about it, doubting its authentivity, and perhaps even rehearsing a bit.

Fifty days is a long time in which to do nothing. The text tells us only that the disciples elected another person to take the place of Judas Iscariot. For the rest, the New Testament is silent, except for the fact that they were still in Jerusalem, the scene of those momentous events at Passover: that they were still in Jerusalem several weeks later.

And then, The Feast of Weeks, known as Pentecost and the city started to fill up with Pilgrims again, Jews scattered throughout the empire, coming home to Jerusalem for the celebration.

Something incredible happened at Pentecost - after the fifty day wait. We have always focused too much on the literary symbolism with which the author describesthe experience, the rushing wind and the tongues of fire.

The real miracles of Pentecost, as far as I'm concerned, are not the exotic symbols but two things that happened to the disciples:

first, careful, frightened, skeptical people were somehow transformed into joyful, confident, courageous adherents of a new way of life.

And second, suddenly, the disciples were able to communicate...

Those, it seems to me, are the miracles of Pentecost.

Everyone in the world was there, the author wants u s to understand. A carefully constructed list of nationalities in the text covers the known world. Suddenly a tiny group of uneducated, provincial fishermen from Galilie were confronting the entire human race. Peter, whose last appearance in the narration has to do with a cowardly denial, rose to his feet and addressed a crowd of several thousand.

Both, the joyful confidence, exuberance of faith, and the ability to communicate are very rare and very precious. Both Pentecost suggests, are special gifts of God.

We know what it is like to be without them.

We know what it feels like to be down, depressed, empty. We're known days and weeks that are preparatory for nothing but just one day after another. We know the quiet despair of ~~Macbeth~~ Macbeth

XXXX

Of almost too much love,

The sweet of bitter bark

And burning clove.

Pentecost is the day when God gives the intensity of deep, joyful faith to his church/

We know what it feels like not to be able to communicate too. What a frustrating experience to say the words and yet not be heard. What a frustration to try to give instructions to someone who does not speak your language. What frustration to realize that there is no topic you can discuss with son or daughter, because the special miracle of communication has disappeared.

It is special beauty when it happens. It is a rare and beautiful thing when two people can communicate. When presence, gesture, nuance, replaces words and communication becomes a kind of spiritual bonding between two people. It is a gift of God to be celebrated.

The world needs that, in a sense more urgently than at any other time in history. The world desparately needs nations with the ability to communicate, and national leaders with the skill to communicate.

The promise of Pentecost is that God gives those two gifts to his church. He gave them to an insignificant group of the Galitians twenty centuries ago, a group which had no reason under the sun to do much other than sneak out of Jerusalem, back to the fishing boats. He gave them faith and confidence and the ability to communicate and if you were there you might have said,

"This could be the start of something big" ---

And you and I need them - Pentecost is the promise that God will give them - like the breath of new life; like the fire of deep faith . . .

May it be that way for you today - as we come to table together . . .

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Eternal God, we are grateful for the moving of your Spirit in the church. We are grateful for your gifts, given to your people every age. As we come to table together this morning, grant us joy, faith, in Jesus Christ. Amen.